



The Horsemen's Newsletter



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Groom Elite Program Begins With Hopes To Expand Workforce

As part of its overall backstretch outreach program, the MTHA for the first time will offer courses that are part of the highly regarded Groom Elite Program.

The most basic course, Basic Grooming 99, is scheduled for June 25-29 at Laurel Park. It will be followed at a later date by the program's primary course, Groom Elite 101.

The MTHA Board of Directors earlier this year signed off the plan to bring the Groom Elite Program to Maryland. Dr. Reid McLellan visited Laurel to make a presentation on how the educational program works, and at that time noted the courses are based on differing levels of knowledge

and experience.

During his almost 15 years directing the Animal Industries program at Louisiana Tech University, McLellan launched an equine specialty program by which students were licensed as trainers by the state racing commission and trained racehorses on a half-mile track at the school. He has held other positions in the racing industry along with voluntarily leading Groom Elite in the early 2000s.

The introductory course is 16 hours devoted to preparing people for entry-level jobs such as hot walker or groom and

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MATCH Series Strikes With A Bang

The widely acclaimed MATCH Series returned after 16 years with a splash at Pimlico Race Course – in more ways than one – and the enthusiasm shown by the participants was a positive sign for the 25-race series that spans four states.

By the end of May, one stakes in each of five divisions had been run, and one of them – the Grade III, \$100,000 Salvator Mile at Monmouth Park May 26 – went to the Maryland-based Pennsylvania-bred Page McKenney, the popular 8-year-old gelding trained by Mary Eppler at Pimlico and owned by Adam Staple and Jalin Stable.

Steady rain over the May 18-19 Preakness Stakes weekend proved a challenge as numerous races were switched from the turf to a dirt track rated sloppy on both days. The Preakness Day MATCH Series races – the Grade III, \$150,000 Maryland Sprint Stakes and \$100,000 The Very One Stakes – had fields of nine and eight, respectively.

The Maryland Sprint (3-Year-Old and Up Sprint-Dirt Division), won by Woodford Racing's Switzerland, generated more than \$4 million in wagering, down a bit from last year but roughly double the handle in 2016. The Very One (3-Year-Old and Up Fillies and Mares Sprint-Turf Division), captured by Brian Chenvert and Eddie Kenneally's Girls Know Best, came off the grass with six scratches, but it handled more than \$3.5 million, much higher than last year when it was run on the turf and comparable to 2016 when a field of 12 raced on the turf course.

On May 18, Breeze Easy's Imprimis won the \$100,000 Jim McKay Turf Sprint (3-Year-Old and Up Sprint-Turf Division) in a field scratched down to five. J. Kirk and Judy Robison's Vertical Oak took the \$100,000 Skipat Stakes (3-Year-Old and Up Fillies and Mares Sprint-Dirt Division), which also scratched down to five horses.

"Everybody braved the weather and was enthusiastic," Maryland Jockey Club President Sal Sinatra said. "We're glad to see the MATCH Series back, and now we can build on that."

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Impact Of Maryland's Equine Industry More Than \$1.3 Billion

The Maryland equine industry contributes more than \$1.3 billion to the state's economy, with more than half generated by horse racing and related businesses, according to the latest economic impact study commissioned by the American Horse Council.

A release disseminated by the Maryland Horse Breeders Association notes that total employment in the state's horse industry is more than 21,000 jobs. Racing, both Thoroughbred and Standardbred, produces \$365 million in economic value and provides more than 5,200 jobs for a total economic impact of \$572 million, according to the study.

The report outlines three primary sectors of the horse industry: recreation, competition, and racing. Other benefits that spin off from the horse industry are land preservation, volunteerism, equine therapy and rehoming operations, and educational opportunities at academic institutions.

"Horses are a part of Maryland's history and heritage, but this study confirms the important contributions that the industry makes today to Maryland's economy and way of life," MHBA Executive Director Cricket Goodall said. "As a part of the agriculture community, horse farms are productive partners in protecting the environment and educating young people."

Horse racing in Maryland has rebounded in recent years as a result of a 10-year agreement among stakeholders and a dedicated percentage of video lottery terminal revenue from the state's casinos. Breeding and racing have both experienced growth.

The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association has worked in partnership with the

Maryland Jockey Club to judiciously expand racing opportunities, primarily at Laurel Park, and pari-mutuel handle has increased substantially from four years ago. The MTHA also has worked with the Maryland State Fair to bolster the live race meet at Timonium in the summer.

"Maryland's racing industry has continued to grow and make major strides at our facilities," Maryland Jockey Club President Sal Sinatra said. "The support from spectators and horsemen throughout the country has allowed us to continue to grow and excel."

The economic impact study also states that Maryland continues to have the most horses per square mile - 10.5 - for a total of more than 101,000. In addition, about 25 percent of land considered agricultural - 750,000 acres - is devoted to horses.

There are at least 36 therapy operation facilities, 13 rescue and rehoming operations, and more than 300 equine associations and several academic institutions that educate, promote and contribute to Maryland's economy, the study states.

Ross Peddicord, Executive Director of the Maryland Horse Industry Board, said the diversity of the equine industry in the state is an asset.

"The study confirms the depth and breadth of the equine industry," Peddicord said. "We have 35 different equestrian disciplines and 40 breeds of horses with horse shows, rodeos and thousands of folks, particularly youngsters, taking riding lessons and learning about and enjoying horses. Both the racing and non-racing sectors complement each other in a very strong and productive way."

► *Groom Elite, from page 1*

doesn't include certification. Groom Elite 101, the only nationally recognized groom certification program, is far more extensive with 40 hours of education over several weeks in order to accommodate the schedules of students.

Basic Grooming 99 provides four days of hands-on instruction and one day for evaluation and job-placement assistance. An important part of the program is assessing the interest of each student to identify those who may seek future employment.

"The point is to get hot walkers to become entry-level grooms," McLellan said.

Former Maryland-based trainer Chris Grove is helping coordinate the Groom Elite

Program at Laurel. The effort involves grassroots outreach to college students who may be interested in learning about basic race-horse care and grooming during the summer break.

Grove said the Groom Elite Program curriculum is set, so it comes down to marketing. The MTHA hopes it eventually helps increase the backstretch workforce.

"It's a great program, and I think we can get some new people involved," Grove said. "Our goal is to better all horsemanship skills - that is what this program is intended to do. Horsemanship has suffered over the last two decades, and this program can help turn the tide."



Rec Report

Golf Tournament

MTHA will be hosting a Golf Tournament on Monday, Sept. 17 at 1 p.m. at Compass Pointe Golf Course in Pasadena. It will be \$65 dollars per person. Please contact Marty Leonard at 203-733-1367 if you are interested in playing.

Pickup Softball Games

Softball is currently be played on Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. The field is located on Rt. 198 at the driving range directly across from the Laurel Park entrance.

Soccer

Soccer will be starting this month, please get your team rosters into Marty Leonard immediately. He can be reached at (203) 733-1367

Poker

Poker has been moved to Wednesdays. It will be played the first Wednesday of every month starting at 12:30 p.m. in the Rec Room.

Free Day Trips

The trip for Annapolis will be rescheduled for September because of rain. The exact day and time will be posted soon.

The July 19 trip to St. Michaels is still on as planned. The van will be leaving the security gate at 10:45 a.m. and returning by 5 p.m.

Call Dan Mangum at (410) 802-5798 for info and to sign up.

Baseball Tickets

The winners for the Orioles Ticket Drawings were as follows: 6/13 vs. Boston: Ben Feliciano Jr.; 6/16 vs. Miami: Alfonso Griffith; 6/28 vs. Seattle: Dave Howard; 6/30 vs. Angels: Jack Hull; 7/9 vs. Yankees: Calvin Freeman; 7/13 vs. Rangers: P.J. Alvaros; 7/23 vs. Boston: J.D. Brown.

Next drawings at the Laurel Kitchen: Friday and Saturday, July 20 and July 21.

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► **MATCH Series, from page 1** —

"We worked so hard to get everyone focused on MATCH and it exceeded our expectations, except for Mother Nature, who did not cooperate," MATCH creator Alan Foreman said. "Despite the challenge of the most abysmal weather conditions in Preakness weekend history, we had a great debut and the response was tremendous."

Maryland will host four more MATCH Series races this year, all at Laurel Park: the \$100,000 Polynesian Stakes Aug. 12 and the \$100,000 Lau-

rel Dash, \$100,000 Sensible Lady Turf Dash and Grade III, \$250,000 Frank J. De Francis Memorial Dash on Sept. 15.

New to the MATCH Series is a bonus program for breeders of horses bred in Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, as well as for those who certify horses in the Delaware Certified Thoroughbred Program. Each organization is offering \$5,000 to the breeder or certifier of the top overall colt and gelding, and top filly and mare.

Page McKenney, bred by Dr. James Bryant

and Linda Davis, earned 10 points for his victory. Eppler also trains the turf sprinter Oak Bluffs, a New Jersey-bred who earned 5 points for a third-place finish in the Jim McKay Turf Sprint. The gelding was bred by Patricia Generazio.

Maryland-bred Lewisfield, owned and bred by Linda Zang and trained by Jeff Runco, picked up 5 points for his third-place finish in the Maryland Sprint Stakes, as did Dennis Drazin's New Jersey-bred Sunny Ridge, trained by Jason Servis, for his third-place finish in the Salvator Mile.

State Fair Meet Adds Second Stakes



The Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association is assisting the Maryland State Fair at Timonium in adding a second stakes to its annual summer meet as well as participating in a new college scholarship day program at the fair.

The Purse for each stakes will be \$75,000 with \$50,000 coming from the Maryland Thoroughbred Purse Account and the remainder from the Maryland Horse Breeders Association.

During the May 22 Maryland Racing Commission meeting, Bill Reightler, who coordinates racing operations for the Timonium meet, said a stakes for fillies and mares will join the Coalition Stakes, which was added in 2017. The Coalition, for 3-year-

olds and up, and the as-yet-named stakes for females will both be run at 6 1/2 furlongs.

"Last year we had a great meet," Reightler said. "This year, through the cooperation of the MTHA and MHBA, we're going to run two stakes. We'll also be making upgrades to the paddock. We continue to modernize the facility."

Last year on the first Saturday of the meet, total pari-mutuel handle at Timonium topped \$1 million, which is believed to be an all-time record. Wagering on opening day, a Friday, was up more than 50% from the previous year.

The MTHA last year agreed to fund the Coalition Stakes and help the fair increase purses on specific overnight races to bring

them closer to those at Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course.

The MTHA is one of several organizations that have each committed \$1,000 to a college scholarship day that will be scheduled during the fair meet. Reightler said \$1,000 will be given out after each of the day's nine races; students will be able to sign up online but must be present to win.

"I'd like to get all the groups involved in this," said Reightler, who noted the success of a college scholarship day program at Keeneland.

The program fits in with the fair's strategy to get more people, including those who attend the fair, to make their way over to the grandstand for horse racing.

MTHA Pickup Softball Games

The MTHA Recreation Program will be hosting pickup softball games for horsemen on Tuesday afternoons at 12:30 pm.

Played on the softball fields at the Laurel Golf Center and Recreation Center across from Laurel Park on Route 198, everyone is welcome to join the fun.

Call MTHA Recreation Program administrator Marty Leonard at (203) 733-1367 for more information.



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Free English Classes Offered

Free English as a Second Language classes (ESL) are offered at a nearby location of Laurel Park for horsemen.

Anne Arundel Community College is offering English basic skills classes at the Maryland City/Russett Library starting Tuesday, June 5 - 6 pm to Thursday, Aug. 30 - 8:30 pm



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